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Wednesday, December 16, 2015 metro.us | t: MetroPhilly | f: MetroPhill

THE FORCE IS STRONG

How 'Star Wars' is bringing the world together. 20

Cabbies plan protest against UberX. 4

Patti LaBelle on that famous sweet potato pie. 21

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MR. PHILLY FOOTBALL

Tyler Matakevich has a jam-packed trophy case, and could be the best college football player in the city's history. 30

GETTY IMAGES

BODY PARTS MARKET

1 Investigators said that red balls had been placed in the eye sockets of a woman's embalmed head found a year ago in a case that may be linked to a growing black market for body parts. Economy Borough Police Chief Michael O'Brien appealed to the public for help identifying the woman, whose head was discovered in the woods in the rural town about 22 miles northwest of Pittsburgh on Dec. 12, 2014. Despite nearly 30 leads from the public following publication of artist renderings and a bust of the woman's head, she remains unidentified. REUTERS

CUBA AVIATION TALKS

2 The United States hopes to conclude aviation talks with Cuba about the resumption of scheduled commercial airline flights "very, very soon," a senior U.S. State Department official said on Tuesday. The official was speaking ahead of Thursday's one-year anniversary of the United States and Cuba's agreement after 18 months of secret talks to restore diplomatic ties that Washington severed more than 50 years ago. "We do hope to achieve a successful outcome of these negotiations very, very soon. REUTERS

SPACE STATIONS GUEST

3 A Soyuz spacecraft carrying a Russian, an American and a Briton docked with the International Space Station on Tuesday, slightly more than six hours after blasting off from the Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan. Commander Yuri Malenchenko manually controlled the approach and docking process. REUTERS

TATE-BROWN PROTEST

7 Tanya Brown-Dickerson marked the one-year anniversary of the shooting by police of her son, Brandon Tate-Brown, by protesting and marching through the streets of Center City on Tuesday.

7 THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW

MAIN PHOTO BY CHARLES MOSTOLLER, ALL OTHER PHOTOS BY GETTY IMAGES

POLICE LOOK FOR SUSPECT

4 A man allegedly used his vehicle to hit a police officer on Monday night, police said. Maurice Taylor, 26, was identified by police as the driver of a Volkswagen Passat used to hit a 17th District officer while fleeing police. Officers were still seeking Taylor as of Tuesday evening, according to police.

SAM NEWHOUSE

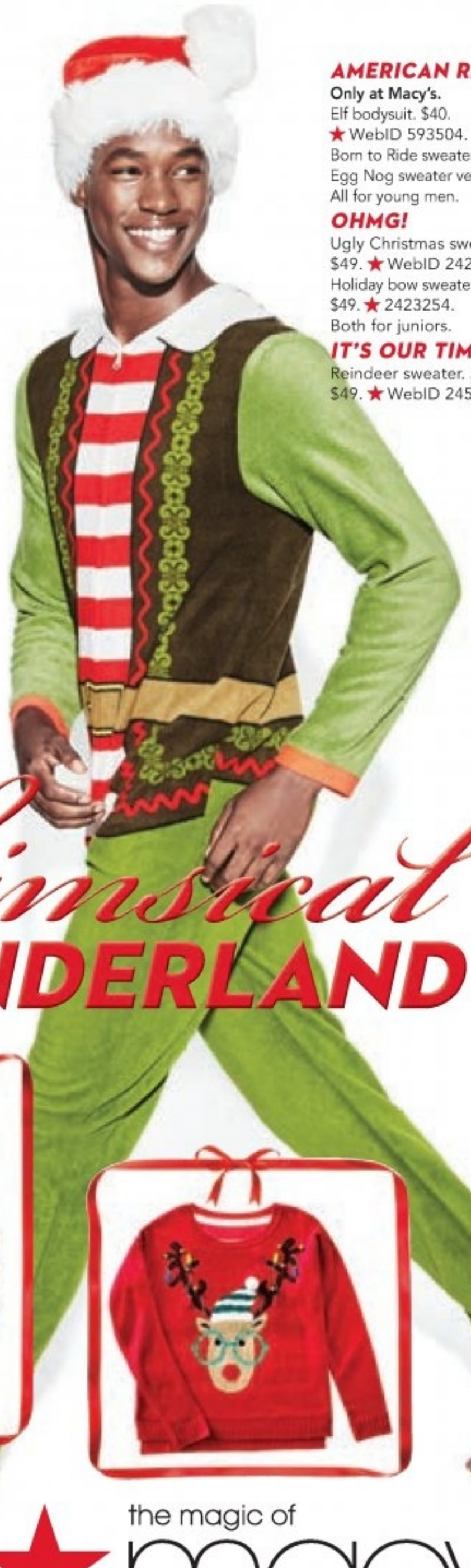
DISNEY SHARES RIDE

5 Early praise for the newest installment of "Star Wars" gave a boost to shares of Walt Disney and Electronic Arts, which recently launched a video game based on the hugely popular space opera. On Tuesday, shares of Walt Disney rose 3.75 percent while Electronic Arts, which last month released its "Star Wars Battlefront" video game after three years of development, jumped 5.26 percent.

REUTERS

DELETE THE HATE

6 Germany said that Facebook, Google and Twitter have agreed to delete hate speech from their websites within 24 hours, a new step in the fight against rising online racism following the refugee crisis. The government has been trying to get social platforms to crack down on the rise in anti-foreigner comments. REUTERS



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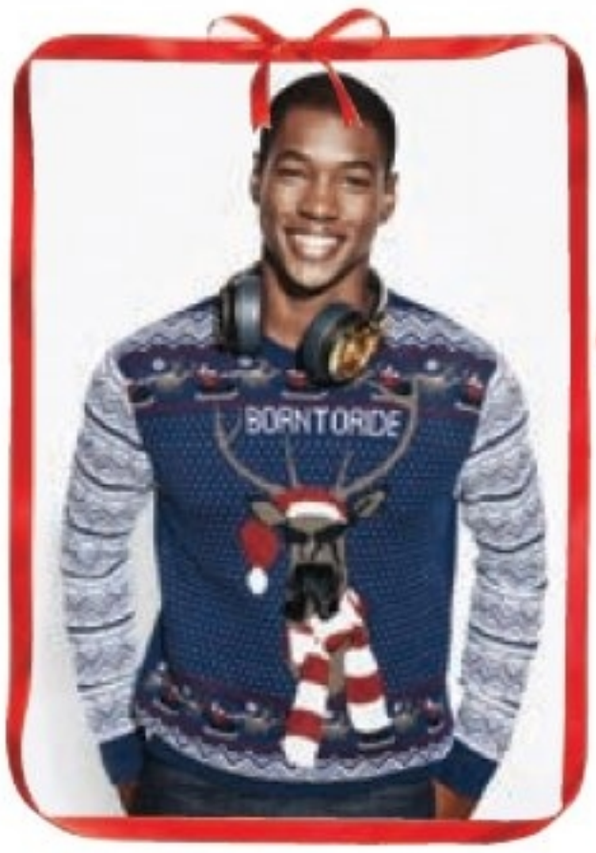

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Uber Black and taxicabs set to join forces today against UberX

Taxicab and Uber Black drivers plan protest to say enough is enough to unlicensed commercial drivers.

JENNY DEHUFF
@MetroPhilly
letters@metro.us

Cabbies in New York City protest against Uber. Below, an Uber driver. METRO FILE PHOTO

Always bet on black — and yellow?

That's what taxicab and Uber Black drivers are hoping state and local officials will decide after a massive protest Wednesday intends to snarl traffic for several blocks surrounding City Hall.

For months now, the city's cabs and Uber Black drivers have complained about UberX — the lower-cost Uber alternative — and Lyft ride-sharing services for not being regulated by the Philadelphia Parking Authority (PPA) while continuing to operate. Cabs and limousine drivers, however, are required to carry a PPA-issued license.

Ronald Blount, president of the United Taxi Workers Alliance of Pennsylvania, said he expects between 700 and 1,000 manned Uber Black cars and taxicabs to saturate South Penn Square and the streets around City Hall on Wednesday to send a bold message to both the state's attorney general and the city's district attorney.

"We're just waiting for lawmakers to come up with something fair for everyone."

Blount

That may be hard to envision, but Blount said he and fellow drivers plan to flood every side street if they have to.

"They're continuing to operate illegally," said Blount.

"The folks in Harrisburg aren't trying to come up with legislation to make it legal in Philadelphia, and we're just waiting for lawmakers to come up with something fair for everyone."

"Uber drivers are independent contractors," said Jason Post, a spokesman for Uber Technologies, Inc. He had little more to say beyond that.

Marty O'Rourke, a spokesman for the PPA, said it's really not a PPA matter.

"Every American is entitled to protest. If they want to protest, that's up to them," he said.

A spokesman for District Attorney Seth Williams declined to comment on the protest — pending the actual demonstration – and so did the mayor.

"We've been patient for over a year," said Blount.

"We're using this demonstration to ask the lawmakers, the city, the DA, the police commissioner, the mayor, to restore order in the city, because right now there's complete anarchy."

Today's protest is slated from about noon to 3 p.m. with members of the taxi and limousine drivers union, as well as Uber Black, in participation. Sources said the police department's civil affairs unit is aware of the event and will monitor it.

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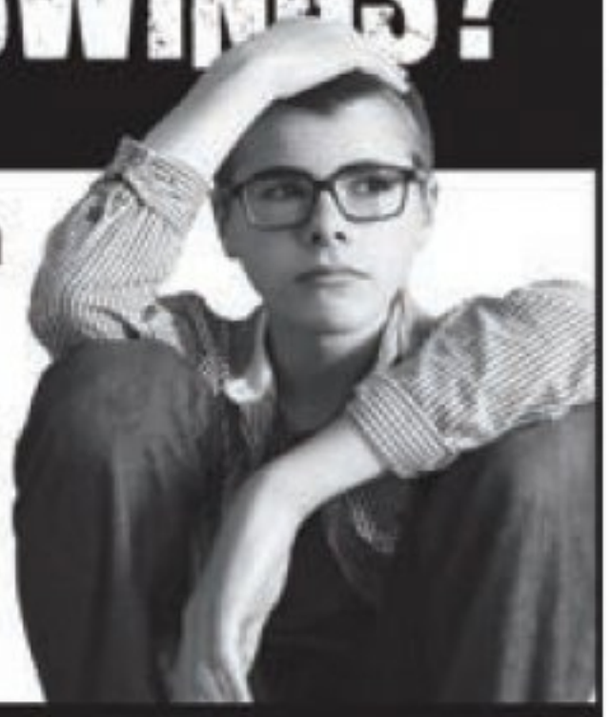

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In keeping with the holiday spirit of giving, Metro is once again launching Tony's Metro Magic, our annual toy drive for underprivileged children in Boston, New York and Philadelphia.

This year marks the seventh anniversary of the toy drive, which was renamed in memory of the man who oversaw the project for more than four years, Tony Metcalf, Metro's longest-running editor-in-chief. Metcalf passed away in 2013 from colon cancer at the age of 50.

Metcalf lit up every year as he saw the faces of children unwrap their holiday gifts. It is our goal to keep that magic alive. We are now asking readers to contribute what they can to Tony's Metro Magic.

Metro has created a wish list at the Target website that readers can access by going to www.metro.us and clicking on the Tony's Metro Magic logo.

From there, just choose the toys you wish to donate, pay online using Target's secure payment system. Your gifts, along with your name attached, will be delivered to Metro's offices in each city.

This season we hope you will remember the children who will spend the holidays in shelters or who may not have gifts to open. Even one small gift can make a big difference in a child's holiday season.

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Raw meat wrapped in Muslim newspaper left on porch

Philly police say the meat discovered Tuesday by a 25-year-old Muslim man in Mt. Airy may have been left there as part of a domestic dispute.

SAM NEWHOUSE
@scnewhouse
sam.newhouse@metro.us

Philly police officers and the Department of Homeland Security on Tuesday afternoon were investigating why raw meat wrapped in a Muslim newspaper was left on the porch of a Mt. Airy home, officers said.

The incident comes just a week after a severed pig's head was thrown at a Kensington mosque in an apparent anti-Muslim attack amid fears of heightening religious tensions.

But police said the latest incident may not be a hate crime.

"It may not be that at all," said Lt. John Stanford, spokesman for the Philly police department. "This may be a domestic situation."

The meat was discovered early Tuesday morning at 8:07 a.m. by a 25-year-old Muslim man who lives on Montana Street near Germantown Avenue.

"It seems it was a targeted attack, that didn't necessarily have anything to do with religion but with a domestic situation," Stanford said. "That doesn't excuse it but it definitely changes the dynamic and should calm the rest of our citizens."

Stanford declined to comment on the specifics of what was left on the man's porch.

But Lateef Coleman, who said he knows the family, described it as a piece of cow's tongue wrapped in The Final Call newspaper.

"They're a nice family," Coleman said. "You don't expect nothing like that."

The Final Call is the publication of the Nation of Islam and has offices in Chicago. A woman who picked up the phone at

Police officers outside the Mt. Airy home Tuesday where a piece of meat was left on a Muslim's porch. SAM NEWHOUSE

The Final Call's offices declined to comment on reports that their paper was used in the incident, saying they "would not put energy into that act."

A mosque is located several blocks down Germantown Avenue from where the incident occurred.

Juraij Muhammed, a member of the Germantown Masjid who was working at the mosque's book and clothing store, was not bothered by the incident and said it sounded like a random act.

"The perpetrators of that maybe were trying to desecrate something Islamic — but the Nation of Islam is in no way, shape or form related to Islam," he said. "Whoever did that doesn't know the history."

Domestic incident or no, the news is disturbing, said Jacob Bender, executive director of the Philadelphia chapter of the Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR).

"Coming on the heels of the pig head left at Al-Aqsa mosque as a desecration, and other incidents around the city, suburbs, and the nation, this is not surprising," Bender said. "We live in a time of stereotyping and hatred fueled by irresponsible statements by certain politicians, or at least people running for political office."

> *"This may be a domestic situation."*
> Stanford

At the Al-Aqsa Islamic Society, where the pig head incident occurred a week ago, a community barbecue of solidarity was held last weekend that attracted more than 500 people, said Marwan Kreidie, head of the Arab American Development Corporation and a spokesman for the mosque.

"What this showed was Philadelphia doesn't accept racism, doesn't accept anti-Muslim behavior and Islamophobia — we're all one community," Kreidie said.

BRIEF

Philly's lower rents are attracting talented millennials: Report

Philadelphia may not have all the amenities as its big city neighbor to the north, but lower rents are retaining young talents.

At least that's the argument Philadelphia magazine is making.

The publication, citing a recent Zumper study that found median rent for a Philadelphia one-bedroom apartment in November 2015 was down from the previous year to $1,240, and dropped 4.6 percent from the previous quarter, added that "job prospects, a growing economy, and restaurants and nightlife — is keeping start-up companies here and keeping talented young workers here."

Sourcing several more studies, Philadelphia magazine added that millennial growth is outpacing the pricier cities of Boston and San Francisco.

Philadelphia is also doing a good job of retaining its non-native college students after graduation.

But, the article warns, that if Philadelphia rents were to rise too dramatically, then those valuable millennials could be on the next train to New York. CRISTABELLE TUMOLA

Philly skyline FILE PHOTO

Skating despite the heat

Ice skaters ignored the heat to skate on the Rothman ice rink in Dilworth Park on Tuesday. CHARLES MOSTOLLER

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NYPD's Bratton: L.A. overreacted to threat

New York City's police commissioner said a similar email threatening schools here was not credible.

Bratton GETTY IMAGES

After an alleged terror threat shut down Los Angeles schools, NYPD top cop Bill Bratton said a similar threat here at "almost exactly the same time" was deemed a hoax and that L.A. overreacted by shuttering more than 1,000 public schools.

The emailed threat, which authorities said was "routed through Germany" but likely local in origin, came less than two weeks after a married couple inspired by the Islamic State killed 14 people and wounded 22 others at a county office building in San Bernardino, just 60 miles away.

"L.A. is a huge school system," said Bratton, who had served as police chief in Los Angeles. "To disrupt the daily schedules of half a million school children, their parents, day care, buses based on an anonymous email. ... I think it was a significant overreaction."

Los Angeles Police Chief Beck said it was "irresponsible" to criticize the decision in the aftermath San Bernardino attack.

L.A. Schools chief Ramon Cortines defended his choice.

"Based on past circumstance, I could not take the chance," Cortines said at a news conference.

Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti said he backed the decision by Cortines.

Beck said the email mentioned assault rifles and machine pistols and implied the use of explosives. He said officers would search all of the district's campuses.

> *"I think it was a significant overreaction."*
> Bratton

But the unprecedented move at the second-largest public school system in the United States left some 643,000 students and their families scrambling to make last-minute alternate arrangements and drew wide criticism.

Congressman Brad Sherman, a Democrat from California, told CNN the person who sent the email claimed to be an extremist Muslim, but said the text of the message gave reason to doubt that.

New York Mayor Bill de Blasio also cited word choices in the note as a reason that city considered the threat a likely hoax, saying that the avowed Muslim who wrote it failed to capitalize "Allah."

Cortines, in defending his decision to take such a dramatic step, said the threat stood out from most that the district received in its seriousness and scope, referencing multiple campuses and mentioning backpacks and other packages.

"It is very easy for people to jump to conclusions, and I have been around long enough to know that usually what people think in the first few hours is not what plays out in later hours," Garcetti said. "But decisions have to be made in a matter of minutes."

REUTERS/METRO

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Shooter was not fully investigated before K-1 visa was issued

How Tashfeen Malik secured her spousal visa, known as a K-1 visa, has come under close scrutiny.

Tashfeen Malik FBI HANDOUT

U.S. authorities in Pakistan could have sought — but did not — a full background security investigation of San Bernardino shooter Tashfeen Malik before granting her a visa to enter the United States in 2014, according to a U.S. official familiar with the matter.

Under the U.S. "Visa Security Program," consular officials in American embassies overseas can ask U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents stationed in the embassies to produce a "Security Assessment Opinion," or SAO, before the consulate decides whether to approve a U.S. visa application.

A deeper investigation was not, however, requested for Malik because routine background checks turned up no "derogatory information" that raised the suspicions of visa reviewers, the official said.

It was the latest twist in the case of U.S.-born Syed Rizwan Farook, 28, his Pakistani-born wife, Malik, 29, who investigators said became radicalized long before they killed 14 people in a shooting rampage in San Bernardino, California, on Dec. 2.

Questions have been raised whether the U.S. government missed any warning signs of the attack, which investigators believe was inspired by Islamic State but not directed by the militant group.

Before issuing an SAO, ICE agents "may conduct applicant interviews, additional database checks, a physical document review and liaison with local law enforcement officials," said a 2009 Department of Homeland Security (DHS) paper that described the investigation procedure.

In Malik's case, though, since earlier background checks did not raise suspicions, no SAO investigation was requested before she was granted a visa to enter the United States as Farook's fiancée, the U.S. official said.

A spokeswoman for the DHS, which oversees ICE, declined to comment.

Routine visa background inquiries usually include checking a visa applicant's name against various spy agency and law enforcement databases, but would not normally involve extensive investigations in the applicant's country of origin.

Absent a compelling reason for consular officials to ask for an SAO investigation on a visa applicant, officials said, such checks normally would not be conducted. One official noted that the U.S. government issues 70 million visas to foreigners every year and does not have resources to thoroughly investigate all of them.

It is unclear, however, whether even an SAO investigation of Malik would have turned up information that might have raised questions about whether Malik should have been awarded a U.S. visa.

Officials have said that before being granted a visa, Malik underwent national security and criminal background checks conducted by Homeland Security, the State Department and U.S. spy agencies.

She was also interviewed by the U.S. consulate in Pakistan, and The New York Times reported that she was interviewed by a U.S. immigration officer in the United States before being granted a permanent resident's green card. REUTERS

BRIEF

Suspended UN diplomat cites immunity in US bribe case

A suspended deputy U.N. ambassador from the Dominican Republic has asked a U.S. judge to dismiss an indictment accusing him of participating in a bribery scheme, saying he has diplomatic immunity.

A lawyer for Francis Lorenzo, 48, filed papers in federal court in Manhattan late on Monday, asking U.S. District Judge Vernon Broderick to dismiss charges including bribery and money laundering facing the diplomat.

He is one of six individuals facing charges in connection with an alleged scheme to pay more than $1.3 million in bribes to John Ashe, a former U.N. ambassador from Antigua and Barbuda and onetime General Assembly president.

In the filing, Lorenzo's lawyer, Brian Bieber, cited Lorenzo's status as a deputy ambassador to the United Nations at the time of his Oct. 6 arrest and during the period of alleged wrongdoing in the indictment. REUTERS

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Baltimore jury deadlocked in police officer's trial

Judge Williams ordered the jury to keep trying to reach a verdict. It was not immediately clear how the panel was deadlocked.

An activist holds a poster outside Baltimore City Circuit Courthouse East during the trial of police Officer William G. Porter on Tuesday in Baltimore. GETTY IMAGES

A jury is deadlocked in the trial of police officer William Porter, charged in the death of black detainee Freddie Gray, Baltimore City Circuit Court Judge Barry Williams said on Tuesday.

Williams said he had received a note from the jury of seven women and five men after it had weighed the fate of Officer William Porter, 26, for almost 10 hours.

Porter is charged with involuntary manslaughter and other charges in Gray's death from a broken neck sustained in the back of a police van. Gray's death in April triggered protests and rioting and intensified a U.S. debate on police treatment of minorities.

The jury of seven women and five men started deliberations on Monday. Williams earlier on Tuesday had rejected a request by defense lawyer Gary Proctor to declare a mistrial and order a change of venue.

David Jaros, an associate law professor at the University of Baltimore, said it was not surprising that the panel had been unable to reach a decision, given the complexity of the legal issues.

Jaros added that if the jury remained deadlocked, Williams could issue a so-called Allen charge, pushing them to reach a verdict.

"I have seen juries deadlocked and come back within 10 minutes, or go for days without reaching a decision."

Jaros

Proctor had asked for the trial to be moved on the grounds the city is too sensitive to the case. He cited a letter sent from the head of the city's public schools to students, staff and parents on Monday warning that violence and walkouts would not be tolerated after a verdict. REUTERS

Seattle tour operator in deadly crash broke safety laws: State

The operator of a fleet of amphibious tour buses involved in a crash in Seattle that left five dead violated safety regulations 442 times and could face penalties of as much as $1,000 per infraction, Washington state authorities said on Tuesday.

The Sept. 24 collision of a Ride the Ducks vehicle with a charter bus carrying foreign students on Seattle's Aurora Bridge increased scrutiny of the duck boats, which have been involved in a number of deadly crashes in recent years.

During a post-crash investigation into the vehicle maintenance and safety practices of Ride the Ducks of Seattle LLC, state transportation safety officials found 442 violations of motor carrier safety rules or laws, the Utilities and Transportation Commission said in a statement.

The commission also recommended monetary penalties against the company and said it was authorized to impose fines of as much as $1,000 per violation, it said.

Ride the Ducks of Seattle LLC did not immediately respond to a request for comment. REUTERS

The accident scene GETTY IMAGES

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Philadelphia - If your home has just come off the market and hasn't sold, don't be discouraged. The reason your home did not sell may have nothing to do with your home or the market. In reality, your home may have been one of the more desirable properties for sale. So Why Didn't Your Home Sell?

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Russia, US clear way for Syria meeting after Kerry, Moscow talks

In Tuesday's talks, the two sides did not focus on their differences or what could or could not be done immediately about Assad, said Kerry, but on the political process.

Russia and the United States see enough common ground on Syria for world powers to meet on the troubled country's peace process in New York on Friday, but views on the future of President Bashar-al Assad still diverge.

Secretary of State John Kerry went into meetings with Russian President Vladimir Putin and Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov on Tuesday not knowing whether Moscow would veto a third round of international talks on Syria on Friday after the Kremlin spoke of preconditions needing to be met.

But speaking afterwards, he said the talks would definitely take place after the two countries agreed to try to accelerate the peace process and a potential political transition.

"We will meet this Friday, Dec. 18, in New York with the International Syrian Support Group and then ... we will pass a U.N. resolution regarding ... the next steps with respect to negotiations and hopefully a ceasefire," said Kerry.

He said the two sides had found some common ground, while agreeing to put their differences to one side for now.

Lavrov confirmed Russia now backed the meeting.

"Despite our countries' differences, we have demonstrated that when the United States and Russia pull together in the same direction, progress can be made," Lavrov told a news conference.

Russian President Vladimir Putin (R) shakes hands with Secretary of State John Kerry during a meeting at the Kremlin in Moscow on Tuesday. GETTY IMAGES

"We reached some common ground today in agreement with respect to the complexity of this issue of terrorist groups."

Kerry

He called the talks with Kerry "substantive," saying the two countries were now moving in the same direction on Syria.

Russia, one of Assad's staunchest allies, has launched a campaign of air strikes it says are aimed at Islamic State militants but which also support Assad's forces.

It has long disagreed with Washington over Assad's fate, insisting that only the Syrian people, and not external powers, should determine his future. The United States believes Assad must step down as part of any transition.

Kerry said the transition period in Syria — according to the 2012 Geneva agreement — would be about six months.

Some progress was made when it came to agreeing which Syrian rebel groups should be regarded as terrorist organisations and which should take part in the peace process, he said. REUTERS

BRIEF

Iran's October missile test violated UN ban: Expert panel

The medium-range Emad rocket that Iran tested in October was a ballistic missile capable of delivering a nuclear warhead, which makes it a violation of a U.N. Security Council resolution, a team of sanctions monitors said in a confidential new report.

The conclusion of the council's Panel of Experts on Iran will likely lead to calls for expanding sanctions against Tehran in Washington and some other Western capitals. The White House said on Tuesday that it would not rule out additional steps against Tehran over the missile test.

"On the basis of its analysis and findings the Panel concludes that Emad launch is a violation by Iran of paragraph 9 of Security Council resolution 1929," the panel said in its report.

Reuters on Tuesday reviewed the 10-page report, which was dated Dec. 11 and went to members of the United Nations Security Council's Iran sanctions committee in recent days. The report is expected to come up later on Tuesday when the 15-nation council discusses the Iran sanctions regime. REUTERS

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Surfing Santas in Australia set record

PHOTOS BY GETTY IMAGES

A group of 320 surfing Santas set a Guinness World Record on Tuesday for the largest surf lesson. Sydney's famous Bondi Beach became a sea of red and white as the group got into the festive spirit by donning the Santa costumes and riding the waves. A minimum 250 surfers were needed to set the record, but Guinness World Records said some 320 people took part in the 30-minute lesson. The event was organized to raise awareness about mental health issues. REUTERS

US arrests three men over hacking scheme targeting 60 million

Three men were arrested on Monday for engaging in a wide-ranging hacking and spamming scheme that targeted personal information of 60 million people, including Comcast customers, U.S. prosecutors announced Tuesday.

Timothy Livingston, 30, Tomasz Chmielarz, 32, and Devin McArthur, 27, were named in an indictment filed in federal court in Newark, New Jersey, that charged them with conspiracy to commit fraud and related activity among other offenses.

Prosecutors said Livingston, a Boca Raton, Florida, resident, was the leader of a series of computer hacking and illegal spamming schemes that targeted companies and generated illegal profits exceeding $2 million.

The three men were arrested at their respective residences on Tuesday morning, a spokesman for U.S. Attorney Paul Fishman in New Jersey said.

Michael Koribanics, Chmielarz's lawyer, said his client would plead not guilty at a court hearing on Tuesday. A lawyer for Livingston did not immediately respond to a request for comment, and an attorney for McArthur could not be identified.

Prosecutors said Livingston, who owned a spam company called "A Whole Lot of Nothing LLC," hired Chmielarz of Rutherford, New Jersey, to author hacking tools and other programs that facilitated the hacking and spamming schemes.

Among the companies they targeted was a Pennsylvania-based telecommunications company that employed McArthur, a resident of Ellicott City, Maryland, who installed hacking tools in company networks to gain access to records for 50 million people, prosecutors said.

The company was not identified by name in court papers. But McArthur's LinkedIn page says he worked at Comcast Corp. during the period in question. A Comcast spokeswoman had no immediate comment.

Livingston and Chmielarz also compromised tens of thousands of peoples' email accounts, including customers of a New York telecommunications company, which they then used to send spam, the indictment said.

REUTERS

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Good news: Most people who make financial resolutions actually keep them. ISTOCK

Tips for making finance resolutions actually work

Make 2016 the year you meet your money goals.

We all know the drill by now: Make a New Year's resolution to lose weight or reduce spending or finally finish that novel. Fail in miserable fashion. Feel bad about yourself and scarf down a tub of double-chocolate ice cream.

It is enough to make you want to throw your hands up and not make resolutions at all. But before you swear off resolutions forever, check out new data from mutual fund manager Fidelity Investments. Its just-released New Year's resolutions study found that making financial resolutions does, in fact, help get your fiscal house in order. Here, some helpful tips:

Work money habits into your lifestyle

Of those who nearly or completely achieved their resolution for this year, 56 percent said their finances had improved. Of those who fell short, only 34 percent reported better money circumstances. "Financial resolutions are actually relatively easy to achieve," says John Sweeney, Fidelity's executive vice president for retirement and investing strategies.

"With diet or exercise, you have to get up every single morning and resolve all over again, but with something like a 401(k) payroll deduction, you just set it up once at the beginning of the year, and then it becomes part of your lifestyle."

In the Fidelity survey, 37 percent of those surveyed planned on making financial resolutions for Jan. 1, up from 31 percent last year. The top three financial resolutions: "saving more," cited by 54 percent of respondents; "spending less," with 19 percent, and "paying off debt," with 16 percent.

Form an action plan

The secret fears driving those money resolutions? Most said unexpected expenses, the economy and health-care costs in retirement. All the financial pledges in the world will not mean a thing if you have no firm strategy for how to pull them off. So how do you go from resolution to actual achievement?

It comes down to forming an action plan. "If it's a few seconds to New Year's and you're just throwing something up in the wind, then it's not going to work," says John Norcross, a psychology professor at the University of Scranton who has conducted multiple studies on the subject. "It requires preparation. You have to be serious about the endeavor."

For those who are dedicated to their goal, the statistics are pretty impressive: Norcross found that 46 percent of people were able to keep their resolution for at least six months. "We actually stopped doing the study, because we found the exact same thing every time," Norcross says. "People should be comforted that achieving your resolutions is possible."

Track your progress

His main trick for success? Deliberately design your life so you are more likely to succeed and not just rely on willpower. That means making realistic and attainable goals, publicly declaring them so that others will encourage and help you, and rewarding yourself for your successes.

It also means tracking your progress, avoiding environments where you will fail (if you are trying to lose weight, don't walk by that French patisserie), and allowing yourself the occasional slip-up, Norcross says. Draw up a specific plan in place for when you screw up, and gobble down a doughnut or two.

After about three months, the new routine will have taken over and your behaviors will become automatic.

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Diane Kruger and Norman Reedus think you can't see them making out

ALL PHOTOS GETTY IMAGES

Diane Kruger is apparently a really, really big "Walking Dead" fan. The "Inglourious Basterds" star was recently spotted trying to go incognito with fan favorite Norman Reedus at the East Village's 12th Street Alehouse, but that turned out to be a rather foolish plan. "They were both dressed very casually. Norman was wearing a hat, and Diane had barely any makeup on," an eyewitness tells Radar Online. "They ordered whiskey and immediately walked hand-in-hand to a table in the back corner."

And it's in that back corner where things got, shall we say, interesting as the pair tore into a "high school makeout session," according to the source. "They were on top of each other. Every time I looked over, she was on him or he was on her. They clearly thought they were incognito. They thought no one could possibly recognize them in that hole in the wall." Turns out they were wrong. You know who'd probably be curious to hear more about this? Kruger's boyfriend of nine years, Joshua Jackson. This won't be awkward at all.

the word

NED EHRBAR
ned.ehrbar@metro.us

Jennifer Lawrence not down with 'Hunger Games' prequels

Lionsgate recently announced plans to develop some prequels to the "Hunger Games" franchise — because they like making money, no surprise there. But they were probably banking on at least a little support from series star Jennifer Lawrence, even if she wouldn't necessarily take part in them. Well, they really should have checked with her first. "That can't be true. It's too soon," she tells E! News when confronted with the development. "Screw that. No, way too soon. No support. I think it's too soon. The body's not even cold yet." I wonder if she thinks it's too soon.

DAILY VIDEO

YOUTUBE

If Woody Allen did Star Wars

Just a couple more days until "The Force Awakens" is here. Can you tell we're a bit "Star Wars"-obsessed this week? Well, we're not alone. The editing wizards at Vulture have put together this peek at what "Star Wars" would look like if it had been written and directed by another '70s film wunderkind, Woody Allen. Naturally, the hero is not so much Luke Skywalker as worrisome, nebbishy droid C-3PO. And you know what? Those terrible prequel and special edition effects don't look so bad in black and white and set to Gershwin.

Ruby Rose is back on the market

"Orange Is the New Black" star Ruby Rose and designer Phoebe Dahl have called off their engagement, Rose announced via Twitter and Facebook. On the bright side, it at least appears to be completely amicable. "Phoebe remains very dear to my heart," Rose posted on Facebook. "They say, 'It's better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all.' I'm lucky to have had the chance to love her." Well, I mean "they" didn't say it. Alfred Lord Tennyson said it, if we're being accurate about things. But she's going through a rough time, so I'll let it slide. This time.

Diplo not thrilled about being the most Shazamed artist of 2015

Shazam, the app that identifies songs you don't know the name or artist of, just announced who its most-w searched for artist of the year is — and the honor goes to Diplo, who was Shazamed over 40 million times. The DJ's response to the news was a little baffling. "I guess that means no one knows my music or who the f— I am since you had to Shazam me 40 million times," he posted to Facebook. "You could have just followed me on Soundcloud, it would save you some time. Also, pic of me in 2008 when I was popping in shiny suits. But no seriously thanks." Somebody's a bit touchy this morning. EMILY LAURENCE

@kirstiealley
Good morning time benders!!! Blah blah blah

@JuddApatow
Bill Cosby can't tour anymore. Can't work. Can't do anything except sit with enraged Camille. Let's hope he lives a long long time.

@thandienewton
Wooaahhh all these FUR pom pommed beanies on heads in London are making me feel queasy

@lenadunham
So addicted to sugar RN

@pattonoswalt
Only thing I didn't like in #StarWarsForceAwakens was Abba's "Super Trouper" on the soundtrack whenever there were stormtroopers.

@rosemcgowan
Everyone has their blocks. I don't like fake bears that talk. I cannot suspend disbelief for a childhood delight.

Getting personal with Monica

The Grammy winner is back with a brand new album, "Code Red," and as usual, she's calling all the shots.

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Monica's name may take you back to hits like "The Boy Is Mine" and "Don't Take It Personal" that dominated airwaves in the '90s, but the truth is, she never stopped working. The 35-year-old mom of three has been putting out albums consistently over the past decade, and her latest, "Code Red" (out Dec. 18), features more collaborations than ever.

Sonically, the album has the smooth R&B beats the singer has always been known for, but tracks produced by Timbaland and her cousin, Polow da Don, would feel right at home in the club. Missy Elliott, Lil Wayne and Akon also help amplify Monica's sultry vocals. Here the Grammy-award winning artist talks about growing up with no regrets and keeping her friends close.

Pre-teen dream

Monica was just 12 when she got signed, but she has no regrets. "I don't feel like anything was missed or taken away," she says. "I felt like I was living my dream." She says her mom always told her she could quit music whenever she wanted to and made sure she had a life outside the industry.

"That really gave me confidence to feel like if this ever becomes too much, I could walk away," she says.

Keeping her friends close

For her new album, Monica chose to collaborate with people who are not only chart-topping superstars, but who have known her for a long time, including Missy Elliott, who is featured on the album's title track. "Our friendship creates the music," Monica says. "That open forum of conversation allows for [us] to create personal songs."

Monica's new album, "Code Red," comes out Dec. 18. PROVIDED

Monica says the story behind her 2011 song "Still Gone" with Elliott is one of her favorite memories of their friendship. The singer was in the studio recording when a call from Elliott came in. The two got deep into a conversation, not realizing Monica's mic was still on. "Missy wanted to turn it into a song," Monica says. "She told me, so many people have felt this way. And she created 'Still Gone' from that."

Another friend, Lil Wayne, is featured on her song "Just Right For Me," and Monica says the video was filmed as his personal skate park. "He understands music on a lot of different levels," she says. "He's going to be remembered for many years to come, not just as a rapper, but as an artist."

Getting "Voice"-y

The "Code Red" tour is nonstop, and what little time Monica does have between shows, she spends with her husband, ex-Miami Heat basketball player Shannon Brown, and three kids, who are tagging along.

It hasn't given her much time to keep up with "The Voice," which she was a guest judge on in 2011, though Monica says she's a huge Gwen Stefani fan and is still a big supporter of the show.

"I love it because you don't get a chance to see the person. You really are just listening to the voice," she says. "That's what it should be about."

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In defense of 'Wonderful Christmastime'

Paul McCartney's dreaded holiday hit is back in play. But we think it's sort of awesome.

MATT PRIGGE
@mattprigge
matt.prigge@metro.us

It's the most wonderful time of the year: when people complain about all the speakers blaring Paul McCartney's deathless Xmas ditty "Wonderful Christmastime." (Not that they're complaining about The Shins' new cover. That version is now a Yuletide hit.) Since 1979, the song has haunted holiday airwaves, its soft synths, simple earworm melody and even simpler lyrics ("The party's on/The feeling's here/That only comes/This time of year") signaling a Pavlovian response in the world's mightiest grinches.

I used to be one of you.

Time was, for a long chunk of my life, I would break out into hives when I heard the song creep into my innocent sojourns to Rite Aid or CVS. Once I heard it for the first time in November, I knew the dreaded holidays were in full swing. I also loudly deplored solo McCartney and maintained that the real best Beatle wasn't even John but George.

Then I started, for the first time ever, really listening to post-Beatles McCartney beyond the greatest hits. Over the last handful of years, it seems the cool kids have too. They came to the same conclusion that I, not a cool kid, did: Sir Paul's solo and even Wings stuff is far more interesting than we had been led to believe.

Paul McCartney's "Wonderful Christmastime" was first released as a single on November 16, 1979. PROVIDED

McCartney even gets pretty weird, if maybe not as weird as John Lennon's art records with Yoko Ono. The height of Bizarre Paul is "McCartney II," from 1980. As with 1970's "McCartney," it's a literal solo album: It was made in his remote country house, entirely by him. But this time, he'd gotten his hands on some newfangled synthesizers and had been listening to some of that New Wave the kids were on about.

Long story short: "McCartney II" and its supreme weirdness is the key to unlocking "Wonderful Christmastime." The song came from the same sessions, and if you listen to it in the context of "McCartney II" — and not as just another holiday jingle played in tandem with Lennon's respectable "Happy Xmas (War Is Over)" — it sounds less like an enforced radio staple than a transmission from one of those alternate universes you see on "Rick and Morty."

Read in this context, "Wonderful Christmastime" seems like a work of deeply personal art that accidentally became a holiday cash cow, and one that still nets its already disgustingly wealthy maker $400,000 every year. It's the sound of someone with nothing left to prove experimenting anyway. And the sounds of group merriment toward the end make it even stranger when you realize it's just one dude working by himself in the middle of Scotland. Now that I see it that way, I kind of love it.

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The pre-'Star Wars' jitters

We hope everything's okay with Princess Leia (Carrie Fisher) in "Star Wars: The Force Awakens," which finally comes out Dec. 18. LUCASFILM

JENNA BUSCH

Geek Girl in Hollywood

Jenna Busch takes on the way pop culture snubs its female fans. for more columns, visit metro.us/jenna-busch as well as her site, legion of leia (www.legionofleia.com)

Since the day the new "Star Wars" film was announced, I've been thinking about what story it might tell. I've debated friends who are afraid to get excited because of their disappointment in the prequels. I've spoken out online about how Rey was missing in the toy set at Target. I've waited in line at midnight to buy an insane amount of toys. I read all the new books. I chase my cats around the house with my little BB-8 droid. I've loved every second of the anticipation. And now — it's almost here. Only a couple more days. It's surreal and frankly, a bit worrisome.

"Star Wars" had a profound effect on my childhood. Millions of you could say the same. I wasn't the only little girl who was delighted to see a female character who kicked ass. I wasn't the only kid who desperately wished for a Millennium Falcon. I wasn't the only person who bitched about George Lucas changing things in the new editions. (Han shot first!) I wasn't the only one who stood in line for the prequels and left hoping I just "watched it wrong."

So here we are, right before the beginning of a new hope (sorry, but there was no way to avoid that one) for the future of our beloved franchise. I'll admit to being nervous. How can anything live up to this hype? Despite my words to the contrary, am I expecting too much?

In sitting here, thinking about it, I've come to the conclusion that, in the end, it doesn't matter what story we see. I mean, I want it to be amazing. I want to be blown away. I want to use all the tissues I'm bringing to the theater just in case. I want it to be good.

What I mean by "it doesn't matter" is this: The anticipation of a new Star Wars film has done something for the geek community. It's done something for the world. Sitting at a concert at Comic-Con, with 8,000 people waving lightsabers is something I never thought would happen, but it did. My better half is in China, seeing posters for the same film I am. I tweet #StarWars and I'm tweeted back in a dozen languages.

Everything else in the world has gone crazy: red-haired nutters saying horrible things about other religions, mass shootings, terrorist attacks. It's hard to watch the news. Despite that, we have "Star Wars" to bring us together. In the end, whether it's good or bad, we all have something to talk about. Something that unites us. I'm counting the hours. I'm buying more tissues. May the Force be with us all.

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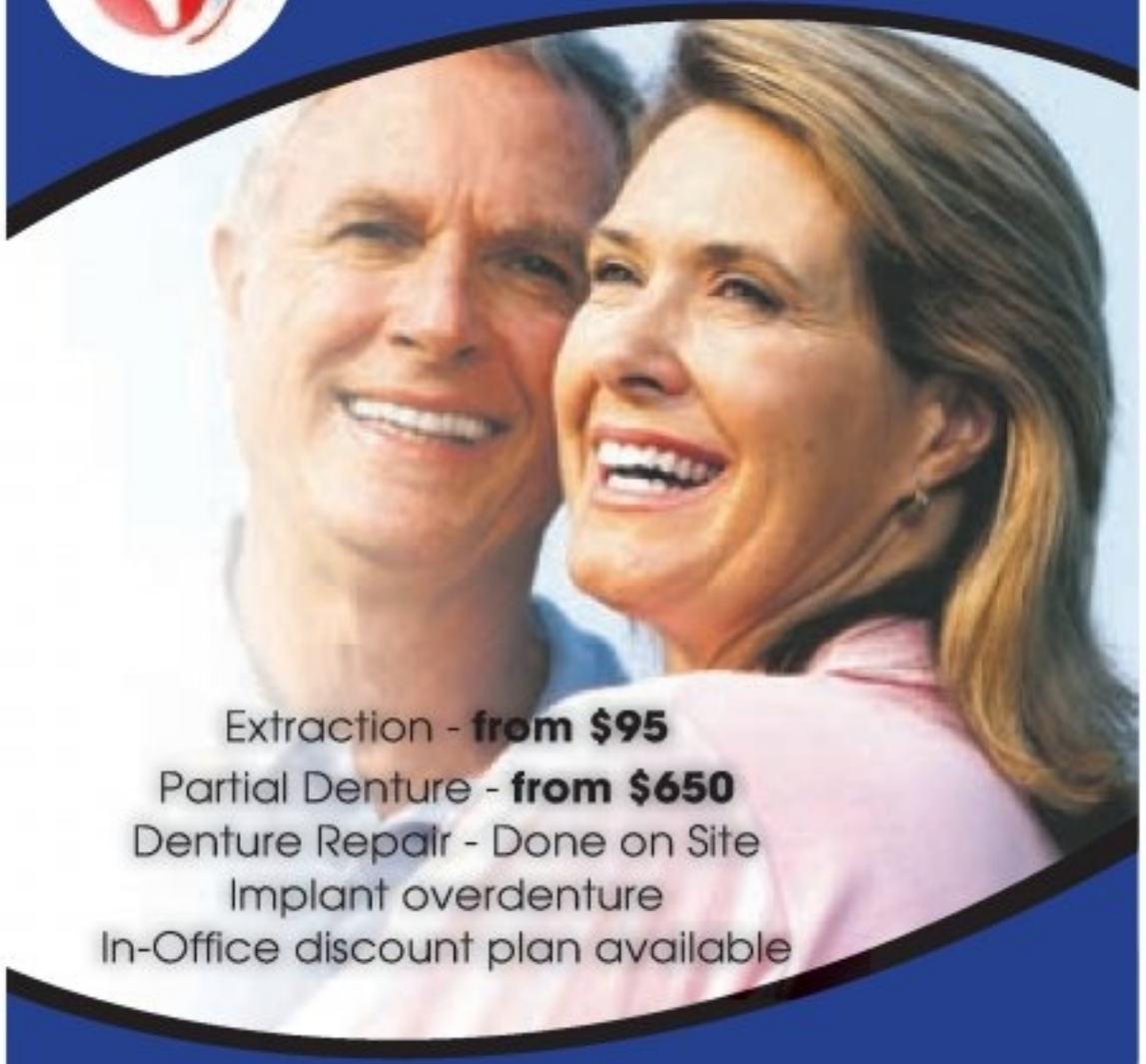

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Patti LaBelle cooks for her biggest fan

She's known for her singing career, but LaBelle's sweet potato pie is eating up all the attention.

A.D. AMOROSI
@MetroPhilly
letters@metro.us

"Patti LaBelle's Holiday Pies" airs at 8:30 tonight on the Cooking Channel. James Wright Chanel will be on the show. DEREK BLANKS

Philly native Patti LaBelle has had many great years since the start of her long career, but 2015 has got to rank among her high points. The R&B queen appeared on ABC's "Dancing With the Stars" during its spring season, held a triumphant concert at the Dell this summer, and started her own show on the Cooking Channel — "Patti LaBelle's Place" — in the fall, with recipes for favorites like her Over the Rainbow Mac and Cheese flying as fast as her outrageous commentary.

And of course there's her sweet potato pie, sold through Walmart. It's a tasty dessert whose sales jumped in November when James Wright Chanel became a viral video star with his overjoyous praise. Wright's YouTube review got over 4 million views, and LaBelle's pies sold out across the country.

LaBelle not only repaid the favor to Chanel by having him come to her Philadelphia home for Thanksgiving (Questlove from the Roots was among her other guests), she's also hosting him tonight on a Cooking Channel special.

You've had quite an auspicious year. How was "Dancing with the Stars"?

I loved it. I would do it again if they allowed me.

What did you want to do with on "Patti LaBelle's Place" that you hadn't seen on other cooking shows?

Not cook with my jewelry. Honey, take off your rings. I see chefs on these shows and they're cooking with all of their jewelry on. You're working with ground turkey or beef and your hands are getting all, "ughhh," with the meat. So I take off all of my rings and bracelets. It's just not practical. Does that sound weird?

Not at all. Who cooks with adornment?

It's all just for show. ... Not when I'm cooking.

Why do you think James Wright Chanel's recommendation pushed sales of the pie so much?

It's his personality. He's a great natural singer who loves my music and when he tasted the pie, his reaction was just natural. It was an honest reply. Now, I've taken him under my wing. We spent Thanksgiving at my home. That was the first time I met him. He came in leopard — this little Tory Burch top — and became my sous chef for the show. He's not a diva. He's a really dear man. I'm so happy for him and that video.

So what should we expect from the show tonight?

A half an hour of freaking fun.

And new music — you've got something coming in 2016?

I do, a jazz album. We don't have a title yet, but I'll tell you first.

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Garance Doré reveals why she's the 'ambassador of French style'

Garance Dore says stick to wardrobe essentials. PROVIDED

The fashion blogger and illustrator opens up about love, style and her new book.

ELODIE NOËL
Metro World News
letters@metro.us

Nearly 10 years ago, Garance Doré started a little personal blog where she would post her fashion illustrations and street-style snaps, along with her stream-of-conscious musings about la mode, la vie and l'amour.

Now, the Corsican-born photographer is a bonafide fashion powerhouse, with her own studio in New York City, a portfolio that includes campaigns for the likes of J. Crew and Chopard and a book, "Love Style Life." Here, the 40-year-old, whose real name is Mariline Fiori, talks about oversharing, her famous friends and what she hates about fashion.

Why did you pick "Love" as the first word in the title?

Firstly, because I liked how it sounded! At the beginning, I wanted to call it "Pardon my French" or something like that, but my editors told me it was a bit reductive. I always wanted to talk about love … but on the blog, it's not easy. With a book, you have the time, the distance. For me, being stylish is being a beautiful person, and a beautiful person knows how to love. "Love, Style, Life" is about a way of living.

You are called the ambassador of French style. What do you think of this title?

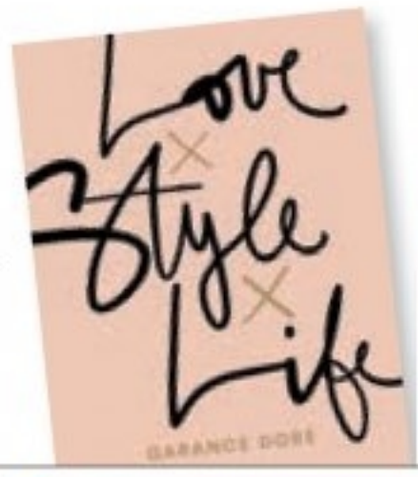
I'm very happy that people are saying that! I never really think of what people think of me — I'm happy if they like me, obviously. I guess I have been talking about fashion for so long, it's probably more because of my eye than my personal sense of style. I don't put myself so much on the blog, it is more about showing other people. I guess through my choices, my vision, you can see my sense of style.

You have interviewed Jenna Lyons, Emmanuelle Alt, Diane von Furstenberg and Drew Barrymore for the book. Why these women?

I didn't want the book to be me giving advice: I wanted to show that I also look up to women. When I lose my sense of style, Emmanuelle is like a compass, not necessarily because I try to imitate her, but because she is so sure of who she is. Diane von Furstenberg has traveled through time; she has seen everything and she has so much to say. She has had highs and lows and she was able to talk about that. Jenna is a very good friend — she is somebody I call when I don't know what to do. She is elegant and very modern. Drew is a great example of beauty because she has the pressure of being a celebrity, but at the same time she is really down to earth. She is so cool and relaxed about herself.

You have always talked openly about your private life, both when you were with Scott Schuman [of The Sartorialist] and now with your boyfriend, Chris Norton. Why do you choose to be open about your relationships?

I do see my readers as kind of friends, and I feel like the less mystery you make the less people will bother you or create stories. It was never a problem to share about Scott; you want to share things when you love someone. I understand where celebrities are coming from, but you know when you love a famous couple [and] they break up and they say, "The distance was too hard," and you are like "No, but really, what happened?" [Laughs] I don't explain these things per se, but I don't make them a big mystery, either.



Is there something you hate about fashion?

There is nothing that I hate — hate is a lot of energy — but obviously, the problem surrounding the lack of diversity annoys me. There is also the issue with overproduction. We are in a vicious cycle of making too many clothes that are not necessary. The [Paris Climate Conference] is happening right now, and we have a real problem of producing too much sh*t, and fashion is one of the biggest polluters. That's why in the book, I focus on my essentials. When you have a few staple pieces, you don't need a million things to look elegant.

What advice would you give to someone wanting to make it in the fashion industry?

Intern, intern, intern. Try to do a great Instagram or a great website. Right now, we are looking for a social media editor, and we are looking at Instagram accounts! Fashion is a great industry because you can really start working without diplomas.

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A Philadelphia story

"The Three Maries" opens in previews at the Prince Theater (1412 Chestnut St.) Dec. 17 and runs through Jan. 10. Tickets are $27-$52 at 215-422-4580 or Princetheater.org. CHRISTOPHER SAPIENZA

"Three Maries," based on an odd piece of local trivia, takes place in a Mummers clubhouse.

SHAUN BRADY
@MetroPhilly
letters@metro.us

Growing up in Philadelphia, Michael Ogborn often heard women disparaging someone with the curious epithet, "She sits around the house like she's Marie of Romania." It wasn't until his college years that he happened across a picture of a commemorative dinner held in 1926 for a visiting Queen Marie of Romania.

"It always fascinated me how everybody in Philadelphia of a certain age would quote this woman's presence instead of the Queen of England or somebody more obvious," Ogborn says. "The fact that she recognized us was why I think she became part of the phraseology of fishwives and working class women."

That curious piece of trivia — a one-day visit by an obscure monarch who received the key to the city and a floorboard pried from Independence Hall — stuck with Ogborn through the years. It was while writing the six pantos he's contributed to People's Light that he found an ideal format in which to tell a uniquely Philadelphia story, which grew to incorporate Mummers, City Hall and South Philly accents as it became "The Three Maries."

"Something about the style of the panto reminded me of what musical comedies were in the '20s and '30s," he says. "You know when you come into this show that you're going to get a happy ending. I tried to include all of the things that made me love musical theater when I was a kid."

Mummers musical

Narrated from a Mummer's clubhouse on Dock Street, "The Three Maries" tells the story of a young woman whose attempts to rise above her modest upbringing set against the backdrop of the royal visit — a combination of "Cinderella" and "Pygmalion" with more feathers and banjos. "In Philadelphia, you're not allowed to reinvent yourself," Ogborn says. "There's always somebody that's going to remember you from where you were before. There's a struggle to remain who you are at the core but redefine yourself in a way that's honest and earned."

In the works for a decade, Ogborn is thrilled to finally see his "Mummers musical" coming to the stage. "It's love letter from the author to the city," he says, "and a valentine from the city to the world."

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RACHEL VIGODA
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While our dream of a white Christmas may not come true this year, we can still enjoy the inflatable snowmen, prancing reindeer and icicle lights decorating homes, shops, streets and parks all over the city. Whether you like it classy or over-the-top, check out these top spots for holiday decor.

Miracle on South 13th Street

Does anyone get more into the Christmas spirit than the people who live on the 1600 block of South 13th? Almost every single house on the South Philly strip, between Tasker and Morris, goes all out with lights, Santas, sleighs, reindeer, North Poles and more, earning this block a place on more than one list of best neighborhood decorations in the country.

Twinkling lights in Rittenhouse

We've been given a rare gift this year: The oversized Christmas tree in Rittenhouse Square complemented by hundreds of festive white globes hanging from trees throughout the park, plus weather that lets us kick back on a bench in the evening and comfortably take it all in. Nearby, still in the Rittenhouse neighborhood, check out quiet Addison Street — the trees lining the narrow street are always strung with lights, but they've been recently redone and feel made just for the holidays.

Franklin Square's Electrical Spectacle

Ben Franklin would be proud of the holiday festival in his namesake square at Sixth and Race streets, which includes nightly light shows running every 30 minutes between 4:30 and 8 p.m. The lights — all 50,000 of them — are choreographed to seasonal tunes. Before the show, take a spin on the carousel, warm up with a cocoa at Ben's Bites & Brew or browse the holiday market.

Addison Street is all lit up.

Holidays on the Hill

Quaint Chestnut Hill keeps it classic with strings of white lights, garlands and Victorian-style carolers. Every Wednesday night in December is "Stag and Doe Night," with shops staying open until 9 p.m. and visits from Santa. On Sundays, Santa brings along his elves.

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The Art of Hygge

Winter getting you down? Take some cues from the Danes and snuggle on up.

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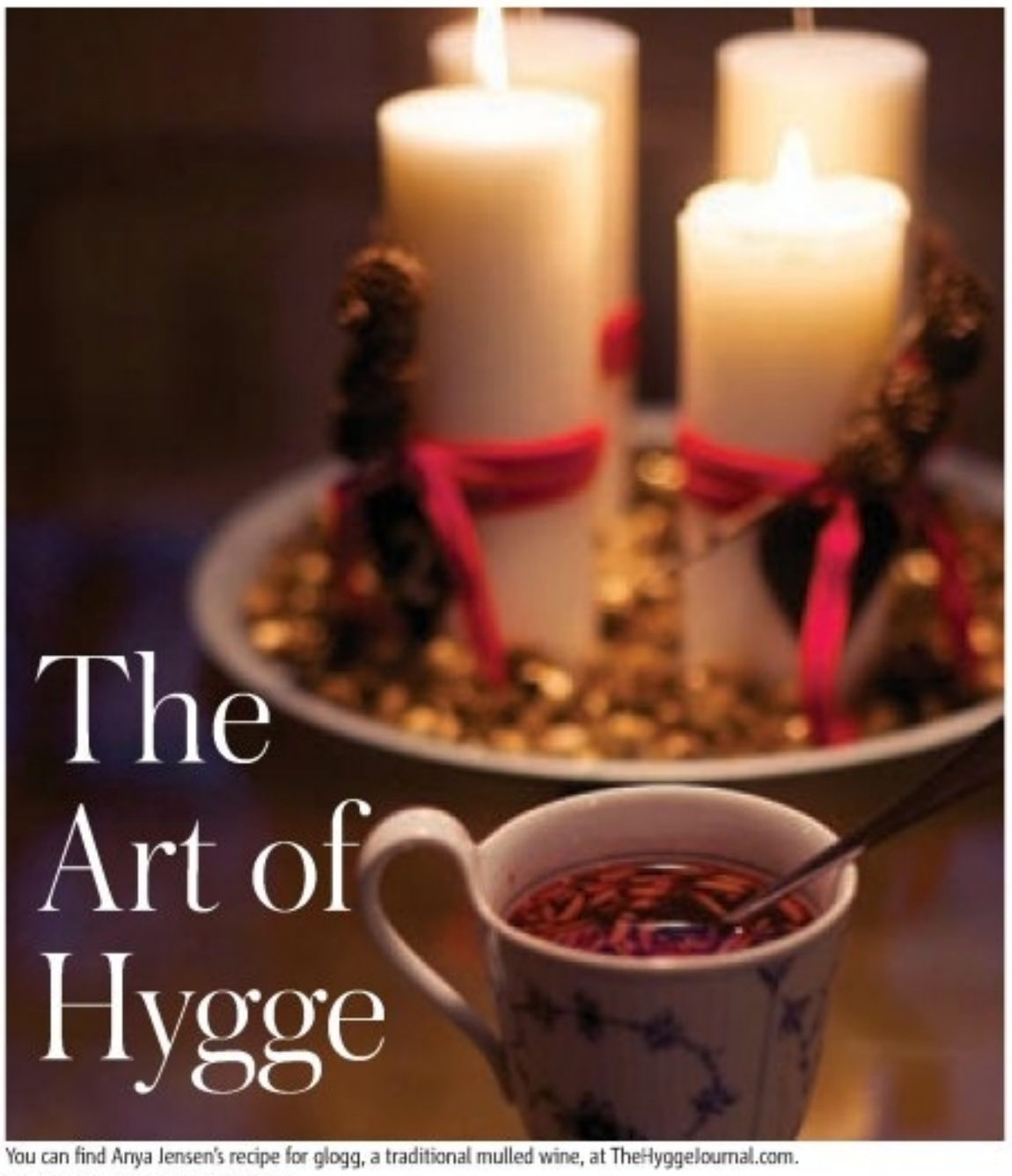

You can find Anya Jensen's recipe for glogg, a traditional mulled wine, at TheHyggeJournal.com. ANYA JENSEN, WWW.THEHYGGEJOURNAL.COM

"The great thing is that you don't need to spend a fortune in pursuit of hygge, so it's brilliantly easy to introduce it into your home," says Kayleigh Tanner. ISTOCK

When it comes to winter in Philly, you have two options: move as far away as possible or learn to embrace it. Can't afford a one-way ticket to the Keys? Consider adopting the concept of "hygge." A Danish word with no direct English translation, it is, essentially, the art of cozying up and settling in for that proverbial long winter's nap. Here's how to introduce a little hygge into your own home in three easy steps.

1 Gather your family

Although it's most commonly translated as "cozy," at the essence of hygge is a sense of togetherness. "Hygge is the feeling you have inside when you feel happy and content," says Anya Jensen, a native Dane whose blog, The Hygge Journal, documents her family's life in Copenhagen. "Perhaps you get the kids involved in making dinner and setting the table nicely. Maybe get the old-fashioned board games out. Turn off your phones and spend some quality time together — be there for one another."

2 Feather your nest

If you're a natural homebody once the mercury drops, hygge is your new best friend. "This time of year is perfect for getting started — it's all about layering up with blankets, throws and cushions," says Kayleigh Tanner, who blogs about all things hygge at HelloHygge.com. "I like to think of it as creating a nest. And why not invite a couple of friends over for a warm evening in? Make some mulled wine, lay on an easy spread of comfort food and spend a few happy hours talking and laughing in the comfort of your own home." Done and done.

3 Soften that lighting!

Now, it's true that hygge is in your heart. And no, you don't need that pricey cashmere throw or farmhouse-chic dinnerware to pull off the aesthetic. But it will require some advanced candle game, the hallmark of hygge. "In Denmark, we always light candles — lots of candles," says Jensen. "It's very dark here during the winter, so we make sure our homes are inviting. It doesn't have to cost much, but decorate some pretty branches with fairy lights and create seasonal vignettes with pine cones, fir and baubles."

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Help (hopefully) on the way for 76ers

The Sixers are expected to sign offensive mastermind Mike D'Antoni as associate head coach.

ANDY JASNER
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Brett Brown, recently extended as 76ers head coach, can use all the help he can get. GETTY IMAGES

Now that the news has settled in regarding Jerry Colangelo's role with the 76ers, other pieces could be on the way.

The 76-year-old Colangelo was named as the team's chairman of basketball operations in hopes of turning around this careening franchise.

The Sixers are 1-25 and could easily shatter the all-time dubious record of nine wins set in 1972-73.

Whether the league stepped in or whether the Sixers reached out to Colangelo — this is still a major hire. A ripple effect is sure to be coming.

Reports have surfaced stating that Mike D'Antoni will soon become the associate head coach. Having that type of veteran presence next to head coach Brett Brown is vital.

Then there's the report about either Elton Brand or Shane Battier being added to the roster. The Sixers are currently the youngest team in league history and have desperately needed leadership.

Brown was recently given a two-year contract extension through the 2018-19 season.

How many of the current players will still be here that year? Jahlil Okafor seems to be a given. Not even Nerlens Noel can be considered a slam dunk.

Nor can Sam Hinkie.

Hinkie's "process" of rebuilding the Sixers has taken them to dark depths over the last two-plus seasons. Only 38 wins have been celebrated. There have been 152 losses.

All of this losing helps with ping-pong balls. Not with the psyche of young players like Okafor, who is simply not used to all of these losses. It has to be difficult.

The Sixers aren't likely to win many games the rest of the season.

But they could possess as many as four first-round draft picks if everything shakes out the right way. If they don't land the No. 1 overall pick, this whole plan could backfire.

Noel's long-term impact is unknown. Joel Embiid's future is murky as he sits out a second straight season. There's absolutely no way to know what lies ahead for this potential franchise cornerstone. Dario Saric could join the Sixers next season. Nothing has been finalized.

The upcoming draft will be fascinating.

Over the next six months and beyond, keep an eye on Colangelo. This is one of the brightest executives in the league and USA Basketball. He's brilliant, respected and motivated in every way to succeed. Just check his background.

Colangelo would never take this position without wanting to do it his way.

Seasons like this just won't be tolerated.

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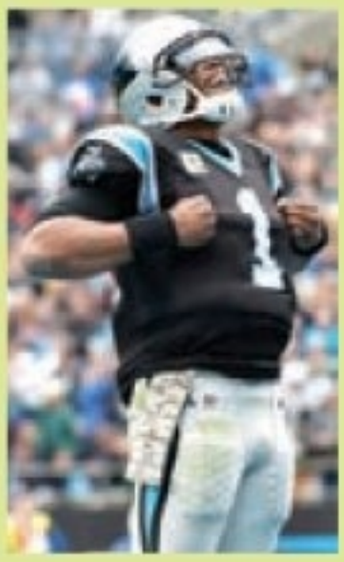
NFL power rankings | by Luke Miller

No. 1

Panthers (13-0)



The defense had a statement to make after last week's surprising shootout against New Orleans, and the Falcons were the perfect opportunity to make that statement. Four takeaways and only 234 allowed yards later, they were right back on track.

No. 2

Cardinals (11-2)

Make it seven wins in a row for the Cardinals on the back of Carson Palmer and whatever weapons he feels like finding each week. Arizona is cruising towards a first round bye, but the road there won't be easy. They finish the season by playing the resurgent Eagles, the Packers and the Seahawks.

No. 3

Patriots (11-2)

As good as the Patriots are at overcoming injuries and inserting new cogs into the machine, they are a different team with Rob Gronkowski on the football field. Gronk hit both the 1,000-yard and 10-touchdown mark on the season in Sunday night's victory over the Texans

No. 4

Seahawks (8-5)

Thomas Rawls' season-ending injury is bad news, but it just means the passing game can keep shouldering the load. Russell Wilson through the first nine games: 10 touchdowns, seven interceptions. Russell Wilson through the last four games: 16 touchdowns, a big fat zero interceptions.

No. 5

Broncos (10-3)

Denver's drop in the rankings is all thanks to a few pretty bad drops by their players Sunday afternoon. And the run game (34 yards on 21 carries) vanishing again. At what point does this defense (which allowed 126 total yards and lost) wonder what exactly they have to do?

No. 6

Packers (9-4)

The Packers got 230 yards on the ground, easily their best performance of the season last week. If they can keep that balance as they end the season against Oakland, Arizona and Minnesota, they may just jump back to the elite conversations they were in at 6-0.

No. 7

Steelers (8-5)

Everything's coming up roses for Pittsburgh; It's easy to forget the season began very differently. A big part of their success has been DeAngelo Williams' ability to replace Le'Veon Bell. All eyes will now be on how the 32-year-old back holds up down the stretch.

No. 8

Chiefs (8-5)

Week 14 wasn't pretty, but it's still a whole lot prettier than Week's 2 through 7 were for Kansas City. Alex Smith threw his first interception in 312 passes, ending a franchise-record streak. And second year linebacker Dee Ford came up big for the Chiefs with three sacks on Sunday (his first three).

No. 9

Bengals (10-3)

Not only does the loss to Pittsburgh mean the division isn't quite wrapped up, the loss of their quarterback throws a wrench into everything the Bengals have worked so hard to maintain this season. Andy Dalton could be back for playoffs, and winning a bye will mean more time for Dalton to heal.

No. 10

Jets (8-5)

The Jets sure look good when everything is rolling: Harvard product Ryan Fitzpatrick has nine touchdowns and no interceptions in their last three games, all victories, and just set a career high for touchdown passes, with 25 on the season. They are in a sprint for a Wild Card berth.

No. 11

Vikings (8-5)

It's been a disappointing couple weeks for the Vikings, who were in first place not too long ago, but if there's one thing this team does this season, it's bounce back, and the season-ending game against the Packers looms large. The banged-up squad looks to continue to rebound.

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No. 12

Raiders (6-7)

We said last week Oakland's schedule would make it tough for them to finish strong. Just like winning when you get 126 offensive yards isn't, apparently, impossible.

No. 13

Eagles (6-7)

The Eagles survived LeSean McCoy's homecoming and are right back in control of their own destiny. They have a tough test in Arizona this week.

No. 14

Bills (6-7)

The Bills racked up 101 penalty yards this week, heightening their league leading 1,086 yard total. Five of their seven losses have been by a score (eight points) or less.

No. 15

Redskins (6-7)

The running game is showing signs of life at a perfect time after disappearing for much of the season, quite possibly as a result of DeSean Jackson's return to the field.

No. 16

Buccaneers (6-7)

When Doug Martin has at least 21 carries, the Buccaneers are 5-0. Jameis Winston has yet to throw for 300 yards in a game, but passed the 3,000 yard mark last week.

No. 17

Giants (6-7)

Odell Beckham hasn't wasted any time writing his name in the Giants' record book: his sixth straight 100-yard game was a franchise best streak.

No. 18

Texans (6-7)

Something must give this week, when the Colts and Texans face off, and probably tie, and probably let Jacksonville steal the division away.

No. 19

Jaguars (5-8)

Every time you checked the scoreboard, Jacksonville had another touchdown, until it finished with that fantastic "51" on it. An impressive feat after trailing at halftime, 13-9.

No. 20

Colts (6-7)

Houston's loss to New England means Indianapolis still leads the dismal AFC South, but there are bigger questions for a team that has allowed 96 points the last two weeks.

NFL

It doesn't really matter if the Eagles beat the Cardinals

The Eagles let one slip away last year in Arizona. GETTY IMAGES

The Eagles are mired in a 6-7 tie for the NFC East lead with three games remaining.

And with the 11-2 Cardinals coming to town for a Week 15 Sunday night matchup, it appears the stakes are really high, with the Birds looking to keep pace or pull ahead in the race for a playoff spot.

But they aren't. The game really doesn't matter.

Philly's final two games pit them against the Redskins at home and in New York to face the Giants on the final day of the regular season. Because of this, those are the games that matter.

If the Eagles win both of their final two inter-divisional contests, they clinch the division (the Eagles are 2-2 in the NFC East, tied with the Redskins while the Giants are 2-3).

Even if the Redskins and Giants win their other two games, it won't matter if they can't beat the Eagles.

A win against Arizona would certainly help the Eagles to clinch sooner (assuming the Giants and Redskins lose this week), but even if they beat Carson Palmer and company, it will be difficult for them to wrap up a playoff berth without handling their NFC East rivals.

That being said, the Birds, fresh off a pair of wins over solid teams, are not taking the week off.

"I think sometimes when you look too far and you're looking down the road and you're trying to say, 'How do we do this,' you forget about what the task at hand is and the task at hand is getting ready to play Arizona," Chip Kelly said. "Maybe we've had success for two weeks. Can we handle dealing with success? And that's another challenge that we have to, as a group, kind of wrap our arms around and embrace."

The Eagles and Cardinals kick off at 8:25 p.m. on NBC.

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Matakevich pads trophy case

Temple's Tyler Matakevich has won award after award and may be the best football player in Philly history.

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Tyler Matakevich is the seventh player in college football history to record 100 tackles in all four of his seasons. GETTY IMAGES

Temple senior linebacker Tyler Matakevich looked out at all the candidates vying for various college football awards this past week and felt intimidated.

The same way he's intimidated opposing offenses for four years as the main cog in the Owls' dominant defense.

Temple head coach Matt Rhule, by his side, told him to prepare remarks in case he won, but Matakevich shrugged him off, thinking, "there's no way."

And then his name was announced.

Day after day, Matakevich has been honored with hardware after hardware.

"When they said my name and I stood up I said, 'Holy crap, maybe I need that piece of paper.' It was surreal," Matakevich said.

In addition to being placed as the middle linebacker on nearly every All-America squad there is (by the Associated Press, Football Writers Association of America, USA Today and the Walter Camp Football Foundation to name a few), the Owls' captain won the Bronko Nagurski and Chuck Bednarik awards for being the best defensive player in the nation.

"It was something special, a once in a lifetime opportunity," the southern Connecticut native said of his recent trips to award ceremonies across the country. "I wish all the guys could have come with me just to experience it. It was something I'll never forget."

Matakevich could very well go down as the best player in Temple (or even Philadelphia college) football history. He is college football's active leader with 481 career tackles, and is ninth all-time on the NCAA career list. In 2015, Matakevich tallied 126 total tackles.

He leads all linebackers in interceptions with five and also boasts 4.5 sacks and 15 tackles for loss.

Not bad for a kid from Temple — a team that was 2-10 just two seasons ago.

"I don't think people really see Temple University as a football school," the linebacker said. "People out on these trips were saying, 'Where's Temple?' and you had to explain. I think that's what makes our university so special. People overlook us all the time and I think Temple University is a great place for people who get overlooked to come here. That's what myself and other individuals have done."

Matakevich sat out his first few games as a freshman, but once he was put in his first game, he never came out. As a senior captain, he's led the Owls to a banner year. They'll face Toledo in the Marmot Boca Raton Bowl with a chance to get their 11th win, a team record.

> *"You work so hard to get there and it's over just like that."*
>
> Tyler Matakevich

But Matakevich is like any other college senior, counting down the days until he graduates and holding on to every shred of college life he can as the end approaches.

"I'm just trying to enjoy the last few games," the linebacker said in a press conference Tuesday, "It's coming by fast. The next chapter of your life is knocking at the door but you have to stay focused. I only get to wear the cherry and white one more time. As soon as the game is over I'll have to figure out what the heck I'm going to do next."

Matakevich is being scouted by pro teams and is a shoe-in to be drafted. He's currently listed on most draft boards as a top 100 pick and the No. 3 player at his position. But even when he's playing on Sundays, his heart will remain with the Owls.

"[I hope to be remembered as] one of those seniors who changed the program," Matakevich said of the Owls, who were nationally ranked for much of the 2015 season. "Myself and the senior class have made an impact on Temple University, especially Temple football. We are part of their turning point, and I hope that's something that sticks with us."

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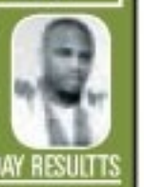

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Court of Common Pleas for the County of Philadelphia, March term, 2015, No. 8575

Notice is hereby given that on 4/6/2015, the petition of Robin Dyson was filed, praying for a decree to change Zoe Makiyah Dyson-Balkcom name to Zoe Makiyah Dyson. The Court has fixed courtdate, 1/7/2016 at 9:00AM, in Room No. 6C, 1501 Arch Street, Philadelphia, PA 19102 for hearing. All persons interested may appear and show cause if any they have, why the prayer of the said petition should not be granted.

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Hexagon Word

Clues:

1. School uniform jacket
2. Polluted mud
3. Make plumper
4. Responsibilities
5. Fantasised
5. Itchy rash

Use the clues to fill in the spaces in the numbered hexagons. Each answer runs clockwise but can start anywhere in the shape. Where hexagons touch, they have the same letter. We've given you the first answer. The letters in the middle hexagon reveal a mystery keyword.

Mix 'n' Match

DAN	ELL	ERY
DEC	ART	MEN
DES	ACH	ITE
SAT	ERV	OUS
TRE	HTS	IDE
UNE	LDW	YED
WOR	GER	ION
OBS	EPT	HED
YAC	TRO	ING

© Lovatts Puzzles

Clues:

1. Moon
2. Uncovered
3. Betrayal
4. Sailors
5. Global
6. Hazardous
7. Subterfuge
8. Annihilated

Take a set of letters from each column and combine them to form a nine-letter answer to each clue. Once finished, the remaining sets of letters will spell out another nine-letter word. This is your answer

metro.us/crossword

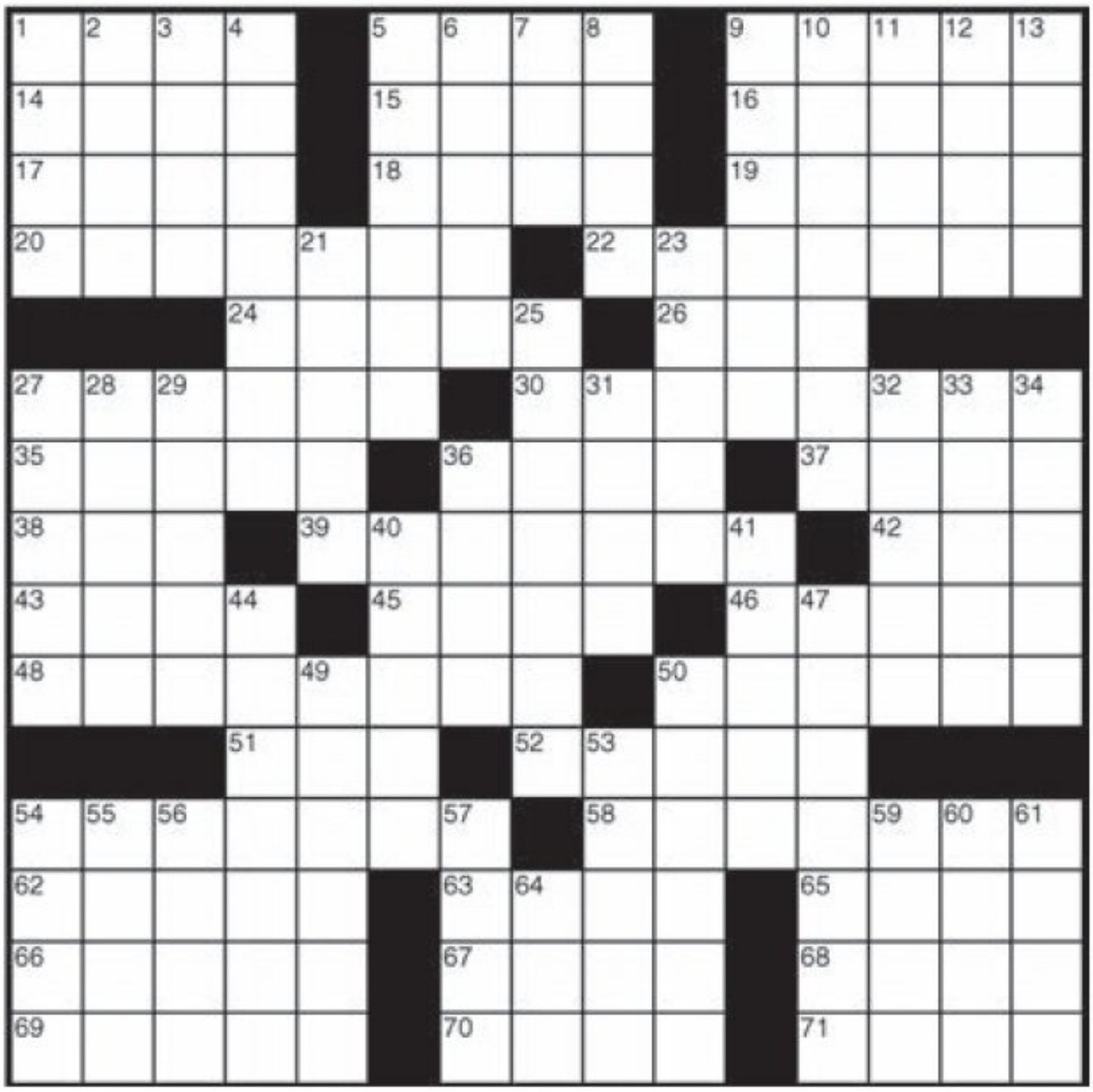
Across

1 Browser's delight
5 Distress acutely
9 Built-up
14 Feverish chill
15 All, in combos
16 Brain surgeon's prefix
17 Farm structure
18 Beethoven was born there
19 Majestic wader
20 Advice
22 Of various sorts
24 Up — — (stumped)
26 Pa Cartwright
27 Red wine
30 Puts out the fire
35 Ibsen's – Gabler
36 Luncheon salad
37 "She Loves You" refrain
38 Left Bank pal
39 Sage, in India
42 Hail, to Caesar
43 Energize
45 Timber wolf
46 Rented a U-Haul
48 Worth it
50 Affectionate gesture
51 On the — vive
52 Spiral-horned antelope
54 Woke up
58 By oneself
62 Pelts
63 Cyrus' realm, today
65 Point the finger at
66 Run — (go against)
67 Rake
68 Indigo dye
69 — Haute, Ind.
70 Warm greeting
71 Past the deadline

Down

1 Not fem.
2 Exchange premium
3 Humdinger
4 Nimoy or Bernstein
5 Mr. Redford
6 Soap plant
7 TV news source
8 Gentle
9 Odd
10 Furniture style
11 Laird's accent
12 "Iliad" deity
13 Memo
21 Prepare clams
23 Steel girder (hyph.)
25 Even-tempered
27 Grain husks
28 Monkey's cousin
29 Toodle-oo!
31 Golden Rule word
32 Fling
33 Icicle sites
34 Loses one's coat
36 You, once
40 Michael Caine role
41 Fridge maker
44 Cordial
47 Sort of number
49 Fracas
50 Film festival city
53 Maui feasts
54 At the drop of — —
55 Crawling with
56 Nose stimulus
57 Quaint weapon
59 Elcar or Wynter
60 Be like uranium
61 Remove from text
64 Vive le —!

FOR THE ANSWERS TO TODAY'S PUZZLES, metro.us/games



games

metro.us/horoscopes

Aries Money comes and goes. Don't be fooled by promises made about a so-called wonder product. A happy attitude will attract just as much attention.

Taurus Expand your knowledge. Plan a trip and sign up for conferences that will help you get ahead. You will make headway if you sport a healthy outlook.

Gemini Before you go all-out, make concessions to fit your budget. Change is good, but it must be limited to what you can afford.

Cancer A positive outlook will make all the difference in the world when it comes to getting along with others. You will make new friends if you participate.

Leo You can bring about favorable change if you initiate discussions with experienced individuals. Do whatever it takes to improve your health.

Virgo You will find a way to realize your dreams if you keep an eye out for the unusual. Expand your interests and incorporate your ideas and skills.

Libra Don't worry about opposition. Focus on what you want and how you can go about getting it. Embrace change.

Scorpio Keep your emotions in check. Love is in the stars, and a positive change to your standard of living is possible.

Sagittarius What tempts you will not be worth it. Don't plunge into unknown territory without proper research. Change is good, but only if it's realistic.

Capricorn Observe before you act. The way you handle others to please everyone will lead to victory. Don't be afraid to be different.

Aquarius A unique plan of attack will help you clear up any unfinished business. Keeping busy will help you more clearly see emotional situations.

Pisces Double-check any information you are given. Overspending on something you cannot afford will lead to more stress. EUGENIA LAST

metro.us/sudoku

easy

			9		3			
6		8		5	7			2
3	7							
	3			1	8		6	
	6	1				8	2	
	5		6	4			7	
							4	8
5			3	7		2		9
			5		2			

hard

			1					9
	7			9		6	2	
2	3	9					8	
	4		5	6		8		
6								5
		5		7	4		3	
	2					5	6	3
	6	4		3			1	
7					2			

	5				2			9
				1	9			7
		8	3	4				
			4				9	3
7		3	9	2	8	4		5
9	6				5			
				9	3	8		
2			7	6				
3			8				1	

9		2	4					6
7			5	3				1
5		3						
	9	5	3				4	7
4	6				1	3	8	
						8		3
3				8	6			5
6					3	2		4

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